

LOS ANGELES BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A
Young Man's View
of the Ministry



S. M. SHOEMAKER, JR.

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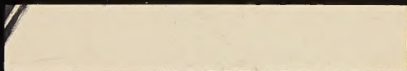
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**A YOUNG MAN'S VIEW OF
THE MINISTRY**

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~~LOS ANGELES BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY~~

A Young Man's View of the Ministry

S. M. SHOEMAKER, JR.

AUTHOR OF "REALIZING RELIGION"



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TO
THAT GROWING NUMBER OF MY FRIENDS
WHO ARE ENTERING THE MINISTRY



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FOREWORD

I HAVE written this book because there are some things which I very much want to say to that large number of young men, especially college undergraduates, who are in doubt about where to invest their lives. I know many of them well enough to be conscious of the many fine aspirations towards human service which arise again and again in their minds. And I know them well enough, too, to be conscious how often, before a choice is made, something else creeps in so that these visions remain unachieved.

This book does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatise on the ministry. Such a book must have the authority of a long and successful ministry, as has the recent book by Bishop Slattery.* The attempt has been made here to set down the reactions of a man not long in the ministry as to the needs and opportunities for substantial service in that profession. It records first impressions while they are fresh. It comes out of a quite ordinary experience, while the writer has been playing that needful but inconspicuous instrument, second fiddle, in a very large metropolitan parish. It must have the limitation, therefore, of only one look at the ministry, albeit in a parish where the activities are very comprehensive, and of being written from the point of view of an Episcopalian. For some this will be an insuperable limitation.

There seems to be rather a wide-spread feeling amongst undergraduates that they are experiencing currents of thought and stirrings of sympathy which

* "The Ministry," by Charles Lewis Slattery, Scribner's.

are unique to their own generation, and which cannot be shared by men who are many years their seniors. I have hoped that six years out of college would seem not too wide a chasm between their thought and mine, the more so as much of my work for the past three years has been amongst them.

I have attempted to gather into this book some of the ideas which have been hammered out time and again in a very great many interviews with men about the ministry, and to answer some of the questions which have arisen. I have been very frank, in some places perhaps unduly so; but I refuse to keep back anything when I am asking a man to consider giving his life to this work: he deserves absolute candor. If I have been hard or immature or hasty in my conclusions, I ask you to forgive it. But I ask no pardon for being very personal throughout, for the book could have no point whatever if I had written otherwise.

S. M. S., JR.

Princeton, N. J.
June 1, 1923.

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THE WORK

CHAPTER I

THE WORK

THE moment a man begins to contemplate the ministry, he wants to know what he is to do with his time. The Sunday sermon looms large, but the rest of the week is an unknown quantity.

Now let me say at the outset that a young man is not long in the ministry before he realizes that the people who look to him for spiritual guidance expect a great deal of him, consider him with far more respect than he generally deserves, and quietly assume in him a professional competence of which as yet he is surely not master. The general run of Christian folk, who know a little of the inside track, hold the work of the minister in very high regard. And any of us who are serious in wanting to become effective in our work will be alert, as we make our visits and form our friendships, to catch various hints and accents of what these people expect in a man of God; and we shall not go far wrong if we try to meet their requirements. It seems to me that if a man's feelings are anything more than positively crass, this high expectation of his people will be a constant spur to him to make his work the very best of which he is capable.

Let us first have a look at the miscellaneous routine which comes upon a man not long in the ministry. The machinery of a parish is apt to be rather heavy, and

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it is to be expected that the Rector will delegate to him such work as does not need his own attention, and yet needs more than lay leadership. There are such things as notices in the public press, or on the church bulletin board, which may attract or repel people. There are people out of work, who come seeking employment and do not know where to go to find it. Many people in distress, who need temporary relief, or hospital care, or mental examination, come first to the church, because they feel that it is less public and more personal than any charitable agency; and if they have the interest of the church behind them, they will fare better in the hands of a city hospital, for instance. There are some panhandlers and ne'er-do-wells, and while caution is well, it seems to me a good principle in dealing with them is to prefer being stuck to being cynical. There will be letters to write and read, telephone calls, visits to be made and received,—in the interests of perfect strangers oftentimes, for we are the shepherds of the unshepherded as well as of our own people. Accounts, reports, investigations, meetings with various boards or church organizations, consultations of all sorts—these will fill a great part of the day unless they are dealt with systematically and with despatch; and they may wear a man out and prevent his getting at more productive areas if he is not careful. All this sounds stupid in a way; but the spirit in which it is done is most important. Most of the lives we touch are harassed with little things; and they want to see how we attack little things, exacting and wearing things. They will not much heed a man who preaches on courtesy when they know that last Friday he lost his temper with the sexton for ringing him out to see a down-and-out when he was writing his Sunday sermon. All through the day, we

have a chance to make a quiet impression for God, and to help make the wheels of the parish slip noiselessly and regularly, instead of with heat and friction.

Visiting will occupy another great slice of time. A section of the congregation may be given a curate to visit, or he may visit them all as the Rector does. It is a good plan in the ministry to make it a rule to visit someone every day: and an inside limit—say a hundred calls a month—will keep a man from growing lax about calling. It is almost without question the greatest means by which people are held to the church. Even if they are not at home when you call, at least they know that the “church” has cared to come, and they feel they know you better when you have rung their doorbell and know their street and number. If they are at home, you will usually be heartily welcomed, as someone they have learned to expect as a caller. A few will be curate-hardened, and you will fall heir to their prejudice concerning a former incumbent. More often it is quite the other way: if he has been worth his salt and has done some little kindness for them, you inherit their liking for him, and they take you in anyway because you represent the church to them. Occasionally you will find them squeezing you into a mould which doesn’t fit, assuming certain peculiarities of clerical viewpoint which may not be your own at all and fit you no better than your predecessor’s cassock. Never mind—that will only last about two visits. They are discovering you, and if there is any “you” to discover, they will soon let you sail under your own flag. People are for the most part amazingly indulgent of a young man’s ignorance and inexperience. A call is one of your most natural contacts. It is altogether up to the man whether a call is deadly pious, entirely trifling, or substantial

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and human and worth while. Occasionally you feel something wrong in the atmosphere (the walls of houses seem to shout it in your ears when all is not atune); it will need confidence before you can help. In a few homes they will want prayers every time; some like extempore prayers, some do not trust your grammar or your theology and prefer "Prayer-Book Prayers." One need never be officious or paternal or conscious of his office, and it seems to me a young man does well to be as much like an adopted son of the household as the family cares to make him, not presuming too much, but making himself readily accessible. Relationships often develop into great intimacy and are a blessing all round—and then there will be places where good judgment will warn him to keep his distance. Good cheer, a spirit of copious optimism, humor, sympathy and ready detection of anxiety and trouble, and gladness to say a word about the Master when it is natural, are almost bound to make a visit a success. You want to leave behind you buoyancy and health and hope.

Visiting among the sick is so great a part of the ministry that it needs to be considered separately. Ministers have long since been given the right of way in most hospitals at any hour of the day, for it is recognized that they have a real function in helping people to recover. The thought that the parson has cared to come; that back of him is a Church praying for recovery (and prayers for the sick ought to be constant in the church), that, whatever he is in himself, at least he stands for the Christ Who healed and helped, raises people's spirits and gives them hope about themselves quite beyond calculation. One has to get used to praying beside a bed in a hospital ward in a perfectly natural way, for when people are ill they want you to do your

most for them: and when it is a matter of life and death it is no time to consider one's own squeamishness and preferences. He is hard indeed who will not drop almost anything else and go at once where serious illness is reported. Some of this visiting is glorious, some of it tedious; the situations are often unpleasant, the surroundings unclean and the care inadequate. But it is almost the most appreciated work you can ever do. Your thought and your prayers and your words and your love, will mean something which you cannot possibly understand until, as a minister of God, you kneel beside the bed of someone too weak to say anything, who presses your hand and smiles faintly in recognition and thanks. You will walk out of that hospital with a lump in your throat, but with a song in your heart. You have left some trace of the compassionate Christ Who went about doing good.

We ought to speak of the conduct of worship. The hour when people gather for worship should be the supreme hour of the week, full of comfort and power. "I believe in meditation very much," says Father Payne, "and in solitude it is very hard work. But in the silent company of friends, and the old arches and woodwork, some simple music, a ceremony, and a little plan of thought going on—that seems to me a fruitful atmosphere."* Yes it is; and the minister gives tone to it from first to last. By beginning on time, by knowing his order and having found his places beforehand, by starchy and brief notices, by dignified behavior and honest attention to what he is doing, it may be made an occasion when men will be drawn to him, and then led by him into higher spaces than they have climbed before. But by sluggishness, disorderly arrangements,

* "Father Payne," by A. C. Benson.

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sauntering about the sanctuary, droning notices and "reading the prayers" listlessly, he may kill the service and eventually ruin the spirit of his congregation. I have heard men put great meaning into a profoundly theological *Special Preface* by reading it thoughtfully and devoutly; and I have heard others drain every drop of beauty and inspiration out of the service of the Holy Communion, by unintelligible reading, hurry, or the spirit of indifference. One does not want to lord it, nor to cringe in conducting worship; but to be master of the situation, and to be conscious that Christ is Master of him.

Then there are the more special services, in which the personal element is greater—baptisms, marriages and burials. One is glad that the service for the ministration of baptism is soon to be changed: for as it stands, it rather gives one the feeling that it would have been better for this child if it had never been born. The service and the simple ceremony may be made to mean a very great deal to those who hear it. It has been my duty once or twice to baptize an illegitimate child; and I believe that it has been possible to communicate to the Mother (who may have heard little but reproaches since the child came) a high hope and deep responsibility, a belief that hers is now a true child of God, which has meant the beginning of a new day for her. Ordinarily these are times of family reunion, and the sanctity of the home is prominent in the minds of all. Were baptism less perfunctory divorce might be less common.

And this is true also of marriage. I am of the opinion that we are often too hasty in marrying those who come to us unknown. One clergyman whom I know always sees the couple some days before the marriage and talks

to them thoroughly about the meaning of it. He has averted many an ill-considered match, and given spiritual color to many others which, but for him, would have been altogether earthly. It is serious business tying men and women together for life; without oppressing them with solemnity, it is not a bad plan to make the service slow and impressive. The late Dr. Eccleston, of Baltimore, read the marriage service very beautifully and forcefully: someone said to him, "Parson, you do tie that knot tight!" And his reply was, "Yes, and my knots do not often slip." These are also occasions when, in the midst of festivity, you may make an impression for the Christ, and lend His blessing to it all.

The service for the burial of the dead is also to be changed as it stands in the Prayer Book. We think differently about death today from the way people thought fifty years ago. There are many beautiful collects in the Prayer Book, which emphasize the hopeful and beautiful aspect of immortality, and which can be used to bring great comfort. Often you will be asked afterwards for the prayers you read, because they expressed something which aching hearts felt but could not say. A friend wrote after his Mother's death, "This is not a disaster to be mourned over, but a triumph to be celebrated." And we shall not be wholly Christian about death until we view it thus with the Easter spirit. This is not to say that a man shall be anything but most sympathetic and tender in all his dealings with bereaved people; but they will be only too glad to have prayers read for their loved ones which stress the positive and bright side of eternal life, rather than the gloom and sorrow of death. Sometimes speechless and with tears in their eyes, they will look into your face with gratitude, so

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that you will know that into their present anguish you have been able to bring some touch of the buoyant and triumphant Christ.

Preaching is the parson's safety-valve. Nothing else so grows out of his work as does preaching. It is his chance to formulate, and to give vent to, his accumulating experience concerning some great Christian truth. He can say franker things to people in general than usually he can to them in person, and he can sometimes bare his soul to a congregation as he might not have courage to do with any member of it. He creates his own atmosphere, and has the minds of his people for twenty minutes to teach and to challenge. I cannot understand any one belittling preaching, or being content to do it badly. Any man who is watching applied Christianity work in the lives of individuals or communities must want to tell people about it; and so must he want to warn them from the perils and pitfalls of irreligion, losing no chance to let men see to what it leads in a life or in a land. Preaching is not easy, and subjects do not always come flowing; I heard one of the greatest preachers in this country say that another of the same eminence had told him that he knew what it was to "burrow with his nose in the nap of his study-rug, grovelling for something to say." But there will be times, too, when great fountains of truth will boil up from within, and you fairly *must* preach it. It will be "on" you like a fire, and truth like that is generally from God. Nothing today is more wanted than good preaching, and men will go to it wherever it may be had. Too much preaching dealing with the peripheral rather than the fundamental things, with purely imaginary situations and problems, is timid and second-hand and tame. Or again it is bombastic and full of

rhetoric. We are not called upon to pat or to stab: we *are* called upon to comfort and to arouse. Preaching will not disappear, even in a press-flooded age, so long as personality remains fascinating for humankind, and so long as truth is at once more palatable and more easily grasped through the medium of a life. If it were not so, universities would long ago have done away with lecture halls and gone in for libraries alone. We need the glowing warmth of personality to make truth live. And desperately do we need more good preachers.

And now I come to what is to my mind by far the most important work in all the ministry. And that is personal work with individuals. Occasionally one sees a minister conversing with some one, and the bits of overheard conversation are trivial—he is being didactic, or professional, or he is preoccupied with another problem—and the visitor is trying to wrest from him some clue and answer to a baffling question, and is being disappointed. And you have there the picture of a missed opportunity. Because he has talked vaguely, dealing with symptoms instead of diseases; because he has not known that you may answer a question yet fail to meet a need which lies behind it, some child of God goes hungry—hungry for living spiritual experience which the minister did not know how to impart. And I must say it, this sort of work is terribly rare. I am convinced that unless a person is born again he cannot see the Kingdom. Conversion will come in a variety of ways to many people; my concern is for those in the church as well as out of it to whom it has *never come at all*. I mean by conversion what James meant when he defined it as “that process, sudden or gradual, by which a self, hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified, consciously right, su-

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perior and happy, in consequence of a firmer hold on religious realities." There are just hosts of people in the church who are still divided, or consciously wrong; inferior, or unhappy; and who do not believe that Christianity can actually do for them what it is claimed it can do. And, amongst others, the main root of the trouble is unsurrender to God. The deliberate, voluntary, manward-side of conversion is the surrender of the self to God—and this it is which, dimly hinted at in sermons, is seldom made actual in lives. Let us be frank: not more than a small portion of the church is converted or has ever surrendered. And while you may preach on it till the crack of doom, men will only rarely surrender until the matter is put to them in the form of an appeal. And because we have come to fear the hysterical in public evangelism, there is only one place to do that effectively; and it is with your people one at a time. There is almost nothing about it in most confirmation lectures; yet what a glorious service confirmation could be if it were the expression of an already-made self-dedication, to which was then added God's acceptance, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! The seminaries are little equipped to teach men to do this supremely important work, for only clinical experience is of much value; and most theological professors are too busy digging out matters of research to care anything about evangelism. And year after year you are getting a lot of men out of seminaries each of whom is comparable to a medical graduate, who has heard lectures on surgery through all his course, and into whose hands has now been thrust a whole set of instruments, faring forth to operate without ever having seen or taken part in an operation! (And there are more analogies than this to the work of surgeons in spiritual

dealing with individuals.) There was a day when men and women would listen in docile fashion to what the Church had to say, even if they did not pretend to understand it. But increasingly religion is swinging into the experimental realm, where men want to test it and learn about it, and therefore want big outlines and not too many details; we have *got* to know *how* religion takes hold of people by continual dealing with them spiritually if we are to begin to meet their needs. There is not nearly time to see every one this way, but certain strategic persons and every young person in the church ought surely to be won to full discipleship. There will be plenty of ministers and church workers if you get men to surrender themselves before they choose their life's work—but also there will be doctors and lawyers and business men who feel God's call there, and take up their work with the same consecration as a man who goes into religious work. We need not manipulate their lives; if they make the connection with God fully and finally, the application in each case will take care of itself. I consider it a sin to urge a man into the ministry or into anything else without first giving him the idea of the will of God and the need for our surrender to it. There is ever so much more to be said on this subject, but I must say in conclusion that there seems sometimes a conspiracy to keep a man from doing this sort of work. He will have to fight for time to do it, and he will have to pray and work much for the opportunities to open. But nothing else will so enliven his ministry, or crown it with the only success we ought to have—the remade lives of men and women.

And now, in an effort to make all this hang together and seem more real, I am going to take the liberty of

giving a description of a busy and happy day's service in the ministry, quoting direct from my journal:

"A good mail—one letter from a fellow who has cut me off for two years by criticism, making a frank confession of the whole business and saying that he has surrendered his life to God. Work on the weekly church calendar. A visit from a woman in the parish who is old and hard-working and unwell and poor, whom I found bitter and critical and hard, and who through simple human love—a few letters, some church flowers, and a bit of money in need—has been brought back to something like faith, which she had lost during her troubles; she came in to say that maybe she had come back to where she used to be. Grateful for that, I feel that the Master is concerned that such as she be not lost through carelessness or want of consideration. Two hours' preparation for a noon-day address—a sermon on the Holy Spirit, in which I tried to say that the Holy Spirit is the free-lance, as it were, of the Trinity—God in His *original* aspect, God the Innovator. Lunched with ———, and had a chat about his work, getting down to brass tacks as to the need for dealing concretely with sin. Brief time of talk and prayer with ———, with whom I have rare times of communion. At four met a woman who since childhood has been a member of the parish but has pulled gradually away. Same old problem of unsurrender. She knew what she ought to do, and said that she would try to do it. Then to see my dear friend ———, with whom this winter my friendship has been very rare. Spent the evening with Mrs. ——— and talked of B——. Grateful prayer at the end of the day."

This has been the merest sketch of the work to which a man commits himself when he goes into the ministry. It is work in which people and ideas preponderate. In a very real way you may say that the work of the ministry consists mostly of getting people to change their minds: to take a new view of life and its little events, to read more into it and out of it than they would if Christ had not come to break smilingly in upon our world. A man who cares nothing for people, and nothing for thought and its simplest expression, will not be much at home in it. But if you feel the woodenness of commerce, the dryness of law; if you crave constant touch with people as that which feeds your nature most completely, if you like straight and simple thought about big questions, or have a vision of a new society which you want to share with men, will not the ministry give you the scope you want?

THE MESSAGE

CHAPTER II

THE MESSAGE

As Christians, and as officers of the Church of Christ, we have a message for mankind. Let us see what it is.

When Jesus came into our world, He clave history into two parts. He set men traveling by entirely new routes to hitherto undiscovered destinations. He made them think differently, and changed their whole set of values. And ever since He came He has been firing men with the passionate desire to grasp something of what He was and what He taught, and then to share that with their fellows. The preoccupation of men's minds with the characteristic set of ideas which swing round Jesus, as around a pivot, becomes a kind of holy and regulative obsession in some of the choicest spirits who have ever graced the earth. Men have always felt the fascination and freedom of the upper air which Jesus breathed, and which He bade us breathe with Him.

So that our message is, to some extent, a frankly and proudly derivative message. It came to us from beyond,—we did not make it. It welled up out of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He struck on it, and some good grace has been pursuing us till we looked up and beheld in Him the meaning of life. We depend upon Him for giving it to us in the first place, and for sustaining us in this truth thereafter. What we say, and what we have to give, roots back in Him, and wants no better authority or origin.

It seems to me that Jesus gives to men two kinds of truth: we might call them eternal truth, and growing truth. Some of the things He says concern the sort of truth which always was and always will be unchanged and unchangeable. What He reveals of the being and nature of God is forever true, through an eternity backward and forward, though man's apprehension of that truth has been progressively enlightened age after age. The truth about Christ's own Person will be stated differently in various generations; it remains forever unalterably true. But He gives also a kind of expansive truth, which goes on forever getting larger and larger. All truth is His truth, and the findings of science and philosophy, concerned as they are with ever-varying and increasing phenomena; the many discoveries we are making about life, as progressively the world shrinks into a neighborhood and we have to get on with nations as once we did with a near-by village; the ever-new ways in which God deals with the hearts and societies of successive generations of men, and the experiments of faith which bring new visions of God—these are part of the truth into which the Spirit of Truth is leading us.

Every one knows that a well-adjusted and successful life has in it the combined elements of loyalty and independence. And this is especially pertinent in the matter of what a man's attitude towards history shall be. Only the stupidest people, it seems to me, remain Tories without at least seeing what the Whigs are after; or Liberals, without knowing something of what makes a Conservative. I do not know which is the more tragic: a life which has repudiated the past, as though a man should slap his mother on the face and walk out of the house forever, refusing any traffic with the past, or any lessons from it, declaring he shall make a new world

for himself; or a life wholly bound to the past by thongs which reach to every portion of him, saddled with traditions and living upon the impetus and by the sanctions of a vanished generation. Both these lives are terribly wanting and handicapped: one needs a heritage, the other needs a bomb. And for a man in the ministry, this balance of ties, to the past and to the future, is necessary alike for his work and for his happiness. He has to distinguish, and help his people to distinguish, between some eternal truth of the Gospel, like the need for second birth; and some trifle which appeals to the tastes of the conservative old ladies in his congregation, such as that no word of any prayer in the list shall under any circumstances be altered. I mean there is a danger of going the whole length of a conservative or a liberal position, and thus losing the meaning of the Gospel for today. A minister is continually at the parting of the ways, looking forward to a new day in human society, when by drastic as well as by slow reforms, these principles of Christ shall be made to work. All through Christianity are these two needful loyalties. "I came not to destroy, but fulfil."

A good many men fear that if they come into the ministry, they will find the church autocratic, the ministers little spokesmen for a system, coached and watched very closely by their superiors lest there be any smell of heresy. Of course this has happened more than once. When the church, under the guidance of her officers and leaders, gave in to hatred and nationalism, along with the rest of the pagan world, during the war; when she countenanced the fact that some of the leading clergymen in this country busied themselves with a trip to Belgium to dig up atrocities with which to fill their sermons with the stench of hate, then the church was

derelict—it had become a machine for the support of a national program, and it had repudiated its message. And when the church takes a brave and Christlike soul, who has raised his hands in horror at its dereliction, who refuses to mount this maudlin band-wagon, and robs him of his office and lets him cool his heels outside the church, then the church has forgotten Christ, and that is all there is to it. My church did that, and in company with a good many others, I am utterly ashamed of it.

But I would remind you that there is another side to all this. Though we have choked off the freedom of God's prophets to speak their visions on some occasions, there are certain types of freedom with which the minister can have nothing whatever to do. When a minister of the church begins to put off the Lord Jesus Christ for a lot of thin, man-made philosophies, when he begins to base his message on poet and sage and sociologist, rather than on the word of God, and when he preaches ethical programs from his pulpit as the whole solution of the world's need, it is simply time he went on the lecture platform instead. We are loyalists to the most progressive and liberal body of teaching in the world. But we are loyalists for all that. And I believe there never was a day in which people were more ready to listen to the essential and eternal truths of Christianity than they are to-day. They are weary with the babble of conflicting voices which arise out of the world's befuddled attempt to say something certain. They want men to arise who will fearlessly preach God's truth, in its simplicity and in its rigor.

His belief in God was the foundation of all other beliefs for Christ. He refers to Him continually, with utter confidence in His goodness, His interest, His love. It is such a staggering thing—this belief in a God of

Love as the Source of all life. For the world is full of inimical things which cause men to doubt it every day, so that no one—not even the Master Himself—is without his periods of questioning. We cannot go on preaching, it seems to me, the *kind* of an omnipotence in God that we preached once; for we actually believe only in a kind of ultimate omnipotence. We have thought we had a theory of evil more than once. But, no, it has eluded us; evil is a wild thing in the universe, something out of hand, something which cannot be compassed even by philosophy. We have got to say “we don’t know” when men ask us about it. But we do most mightily believe in a rebel God, Who with us is fighting evil down, and will not cease till the battle is won. We can, and must, preach that kind of a God. Men can take Him in, side with Him, understand Him, and love Him. Christ on the Cross is the best picture of Him we ever had. We are committed to a belief in a God like that. It is utterly fundamental to anything else that we can possibly say or believe in Christ’s Church. And if there is a God like that in this universe, then it is a home—a fair and friendly place where I may live and work in peace and confidence. And if there is no God like that, or no God at all, this universe is a barren desert, stripped of hope and security and meaning; then verily it is a darkling plain where ignorant armies clash by night. On the facts you have, you must choose your faith. And if you go with Jesus in believing that God is after this sort, you have something to tell people about life.

Then you have Christ Himself to preach about. And you can depend upon it that every living human being who ever caught sight of Him is interested in Him and wants to hear more about Him. There is a tiny Christ

in every man, and when you have seen the consciences of enough people laid bare, and know how exactly Jesus is what they *feel*, you will know what Vinet meant when he said that Christ fits the souls of men as a key fits a lock. The Christian message is invincible precisely because Jesus Christ is Himself irresistible. Men will dicker over theology and decry churches; but it can only be called a form of abnormality when one fails to recognize in Christ the fulfilment of all the hopes of men. Secretly, perhaps, and silently, men say in their hearts, as they look upon Him, "Yes, that's it." And one is glad that Christ said so much about Himself, in the little that we have about Him. Every word is a window into His life. It is an amazing thing to have Him center His message in Himself, but He undoubtedly did. And I have found it an unending joy and profit to dwell, both inwardly and in preaching, upon this perfect and selfless Christ making these gigantic claims for Himself in the interests of the truth. All others who talk about themselves become self-seeking, self-centered, play safe and begin to use men for their ends. He confesses His Godhead, and goes unflinching to His Cross that, beckoning from that awful eminence, He may draw the world unto Him. Jesus is the only thing in all the world that wholly satisfies. He was what He taught. There is no last touch of exquisite beauty in any of His words which was not pictured and lived in His life. There are no flaws, no gaps, no lapses, no moral disappointments in Him. I have seen men put Him to the test—the test of holding them in temptation, of comforting them in affliction, of developing in them all that they could be—and I have never seen Him fail where men took Him at His word. I have watched steadily to see if He fulfils His promises; and I tell you that we

have a Christ who is sufficient for these things! We may go on using superlatives until they are all gone—we shall not have said half. T. R. Glover says there is more in Him than has ever been discovered. And in a world where so many faint and waver and quail, I ask you to consider the value of dwelling again and again upon the thought of Christ as the Goal of life, and holding Him ever in the plain view of all the people. For they are hungry to hear about Him.

Now there are a great many people who believe in God and in Jesus Christ who, at least in any practical fashion, do not actually believe in the Holy Spirit. I don't believe anything is as important in our modern religious life as a rediscovery of the Holy Ghost. We believe in God the Father largely because we must; the heavens declare not only His glory but His inevitability. We believe in Christ because He was an historical character and forces Himself on our consciousness. But, as He was continually looking back towards His Father, so He was continually looking forward towards the time when His Spirit should guide men wholly. Somehow we feel familiar with the thought of God the Father, and God the Son; but because a complete theology of the Holy Spirit is difficult, and because His workings are so unexpected and His guidance so very exacting if you depend upon it, we prefer to live on this truncated gospel. Our inveterate tendency is to *fix* things: if we can make the Sermon on the Mount into another Mosaic Law, and live by rote, so much bother is averted. But we can't—not if we call ourselves Christians. We must live up to the high challenge of getting our orders, not by memory and rule, but by personal inspiration and illumination. We cannot meet the various situations in life according to any rule-of-thumb. When St. Augus-

tine said that St. Paul's ethics might be tersely put thus: "Love God and do as you please," he said something which every Christian must learn the meaning of. Plainly, if a man loves God, he will not do as he would have pleased had he not loved God. But what shall he do? St. Paul cut the law from under his feet as an infallible guide. There are hosts of situations the Gospels do not cover. Well, he has simply to steep himself in the attitude which was Jesus', and in those few broad and simple principles by which He lived; and when he wants to know what to do, he has to think for all he is worth, and then give himself utterly to listening to the Spirit of God. Pentecost was more than a promise to obey the Sermon on the Mount. There are few references to any kind of rules in the Acts or the Epistles: but there is a great deal about the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. We have, in the Church and in the ministry, a very great many intelligent and conscientious people; but we have very few inspired people. And we shall not get past that rather matter-of-fact and spiritless Christianity so prevalent to-day until we learn to believe that the Holy Spirit still guides and empowers. When men begin to take the intimations of the still, small Voice which come to them, as having the authority of the Holy Spirit; and when they are ready to carry out those instructions, even to be fools for His sake if necessary, and so to do the amazing things which in every age the Holy Spirit has prompted and used to the glory of God, then we shall have a converting ministry and a converted church.

Christianity has always quietly assumed the reality of sin, and dealt with it not as fiction but as a concrete actuality. There is abroad in the world to-day an outgrowth of scientific materialism which calls all sin by

some long and explanatory and excusing psychological name. The philosophy behind this is that man is not responsible for what he does—it grows out of his physical equipment. And if he is not responsible for it, then there is nothing he can do about it. And you wind up in a morass, wherein it seems to me hopeless for a man to try to be anything but a semi-cultivated swine. Christianity has recognized difficulties of environment and heredity, and made allowances for them; but it has strongly emphasized the areas in which man's freedom may be exercised to make his life higher and finer. Christianity does not look on sin as merely selfishness: sin is disobedience of God, the child's refusal to listen to the Father. Sin is not mixing up the relationships between men only; it is the estrangement of lives from God. Any thought about sin carries you straight to the Cross of Christ, for there it was that God told the world to what lengths He was willing to go to do away with sin. A frank and powerful exposure of the deadliness of sin is an element lacking in most modern preaching. If a man's ministry is to be a converting ministry, he must not apologize for using the word sin; and he must not be afraid to deal with it in the concrete, in the lives of his people. Half the futility of many a minister's work is a refusal to recognize the enormous needs in the lives of some of his most faithful followers, taking things for granted about them which simply are not so. Whatever he calls it by, let him stop his timidity about dealing drastically with sin. It is part of his message to help his people to see that in Christ they may have peace and victory.

One other song which he must be singing continually is that of the assurance of immortality. The Gospel of St. John makes "eternal life" a matter of character and

tendency rather than of duration, and we all of us feel decreasingly the break between this life and that beyond. Our thought of evolution has given an almost biological tinge to immortality itself; we think of it as being the outgrowth of what we are here. This puts a dignity to human life in the flesh, and does away with those unhealthy deprecations of it which abound in Mediæval Christianity and linger yet in certain ascetic minds, and certainly takes no glory from an older view of eternity. A young man needs to handle this with a good deal of care. For sitting before him are many who, through their old dim eyes, can see already the outlines of the other shore; to whom immortality has become, as it seldom is to a younger man, immensely pertinent. Their faces turn up to you when you talk about it; it carries to them a sort of pathos mixed with a great joy and hope. They feel that they will know before long. And in the presence of those who will make that early discovery, one speaks of it without too much dogmatism and definiteness. The thought of immortality is a sobering one to those who are careless; and it is a beautiful one to those who are weary. It is this which caused Christianity first to triumph over its rivals, and it is this, more than anything else, which gives Christianity to-day its peculiar power of buoying people up through every kind of trial. A man must go to his people with the belief that we have immortality on our hands—and help them to make ready for it, and to interpret this life in terms of it.

There is much else to say about the message. These great trunks of truth split off into a dozen mighty arms, and these again into a hundred twigs. If one does expository preaching (that is, preaching of what he finds *in* the Bible, as against what he finds outside in the ex-

perience of life) he will find these themes recurring over and over, each time with a new tinge or twist to them. One never exhausts the fertile suggestions which come pouring out of the Scriptures. Let there be no fear that you will have "nothing to preach about," if only you keep studying your Bible, keeping up with your general reading, and dealing constantly with the innermost spiritual lives of people. Messages are forged in interviews, and the old truths will keep coming back with enhanced meaning as more and more you see them put to the test of carrying people onward and upward.

The Christian message is one of unconquerable joy and hope. He who is set to preach it is entrusted with the transmission to men of the greatest gift ever let down from heaven into earth. It is the most optimistic and fact-facing interpretation of life that the world has ever seen. It makes life dignified and valuable and happy, as nothing else can. If Christianity is not true, life is devoid of rhyme or reason; all the perilous and costly ascent of man, and all the rolling of the restless spheres are alike as idle as the wind that blows the sands into senseless shapes upon an undiscovered beach. But if Christianity *is* true, if God is what Christ says that He is, then there is not a bird-note in a woodland, nor a fleck of errant cloud in the sky, nor a holy hope in the heart of a savage, which is not brimful of tingling significance!

And it is true.

THE CALL

CHAPTER III

THE CALL

How shall a man know whether he ought to go into the ministry? Is there anything like a sure way of finding out?

There are two factors which have to be taken into consideration when a man thinks of deciding upon his life-work. One is his own abilities and inclinations; the other is the world situation. Most men give much thought to the first, and almost none to the second. But if successful life means a combination of inward personal adjustment, and outward adjustment to environment, then both these factors must be considered.

There is a good deal to be gained by a frank estimate of one's own powers. One has to believe that if qualities are not to be wasted entirely they have been given to us for use. It seems a pity to make no use of a magnificent voice, an exceptional literary gift, or a peculiar aptitude for handling people. We feel that something is violated when a man has thrown away a great capacity. There is some indication of the general field of a man's activity by his likes and dislikes, as in the case of the "born mechanic" or "born surgeon"—everything in them pulls them one way, and they are drawn by irresistible attraction to that way. But this is only true of a few men. The larger majority have no outstanding gifts, no particular bent in any direction, many interests but no con-

suming passion; they feel, without necessarily any unwarranted egotism, that they could do a variety of things about equally well. They see certain sides of their natures will be developed in one kind of work, other sides in another. They feel that nothing has yet made its appeal as the one highest best thing they can do.

It is especially for men like this, who constitute so terribly large a portion of even the graduating classes at college, that I feel some thought of the objective situation, as well as of their own fitness, is helpful and necessary. In considering the law, for instance, they ought to ask themselves whether the crowding and competition of the law in this country makes it wise to enter the law. If they then say that the need is for *better* lawyers let them ask themselves whether their powers in this field are such that they can make a noticeable impression; and whether their standards are so fixed that they cannot be swerved from principle under pressure of a possible very great fee. Let men face the question of what professions are dealing with the higher and more important phases of human life—not increasing the grab and friction and tumult of life, but making it sweet and amenable and lofty and fully social, and whether there is not more need here than in some commercial enterprise. Most men want to serve, but they have not quite got to the point of being willing to serve entirely, without one eye on gain. For them this outward look at the needs of the situation seems a far better approach than the consultation of their own preferences. Look out upon America, and the world beyond, and tell yourself whether you honestly feel you are more needed to help in raising the minds of men to truth and beauty and goodness, or to go and sell bonds in Wall Street.

And that some may be helped in choosing between the

fields that offer when this investigation has been made, I want to suggest six steps* which, if they are faithfully and consistently followed, will usually bring a man into clear daylight:

1. Pray. Prayer, mind you, is not an effort to alter the will of God but to discover it. Dr. Fosdick called it once "giving God gangway." If God is what Christ said He is, He is far more anxious to communicate His plan to us than we are to find it. The continual attitude of listening is the surface upon which God can make a mark. This may come gradually as slowly we feel things settling to one side or the other. Or it may come in a sudden and revealing flash, a thought lodging in our minds which was not there before; and which will need to be sympathetically tested to see if it bears scrutiny and reason. It is usually more definite if we take some plan to God and scrutinize it fore and aft in His presence, though this runs the risk of assuming on too little evidence His concurrence with some "pet scheme" of our own. We need an absolutely open mind. A camera film is no good with two impressions, and we need to expose to Him a clean film. Let us quit the sort of prayer that strains and is tense, for this hinders and does not help the Spirit of God to make Himself felt. Sometimes prayer flat on our back will be found to be the most relaxed prayer, when we can most easily lie ready for suggestions from Him. This is supremely the way to find out what to do—to pray.

2. Think. There is a moral obligation to be intelligent. We want to look all the facts in the face—our

* For the chief thoughts here I am indebted to Henry Drummond.

own abilities, discovered and undiscovered. We need to realize how much of us may never have come to the surface. And if a man says he cannot preach a sermon, I tell him neither can he operate for cancer, nor draw plans for a cathedral—he must learn. We need to think of where the line is thinnest and help is weakest, as well as thinking of where we can make the best showing. We need men to think about modern industrial conditions; there may be plenty of high sentiment on either side, it solves nothing without sense. We may *feel* right and *be* wrong. Think as hard and as much as you can, and make sure it is honest thought which does not blink at a thing. Only let it be said: we cannot do it by human thought alone. It must have our thought plus God's thought; our minds illuminated by the grace of God, which has a way of casting over men's mind a kind of colossal honesty which makes them play fair. There is something else in the world besides what we call "common-sense." Ask the average earth-bound whether he thinks the Cross of Christ was wise or not, and he will say no. And lives lived on the Cross-basis do not always conform to worldly common-sense.

3. Talk to wise people, but do not regard their view as final. By wise people one means wise in spiritual things. A friend of mine who is going into the ministry went to a business man's office once, and was by him invited to come into his business with him. My friend thanked him and said he had already decided on his work. "For what?" asked the man. "For the ministry," said my friend. "Why you — fool!" was his comment. Now that man forfeited his right to advise anybody. We have got to discuss the will of God with men who believe in the will of God,

and love it, not with one like that. We do not go to a pipe-fitter about Robert Browning, nor a Kentucky legislature about evolution—we go to men who know what they are talking about. I never could see the reason for wanting the O. K. of some fat magnate, without any imagination or spirituality, on a call which conscience registers as from God! In the last analysis, the decision is your own; and while conversations with people may clarify the issue, as often they cloud them. Not too much talk, then, and the final choice is not to depend on any one person's say-so.

4. Look out for your own bias and predilection, but do not be too much afraid of them. Some people think because a job is hard, and nettles every fiber of them, it is therefore the will of God, as though God were hunting for ways in which to make men unhappy. I have known men for whom the will of God meant a heavy cross which cut straight through their own plans and hopes—the leaning of their own will was strong, and it collided with the will of God. But God is looking for our ultimate happiness much more than we. If He calls where the field seems hard now, the day will come when you will be glad you went there. Do not think of His will as always in the line of the disagreeable. If He is plainly pointing where we do not want to go, let us rise up and follow—not because it is unpleasant, but because it is right.

5. Use your Bible. The Bible is no answer-book to which a man can turn and have all his questions solved, but there is no book in the world which throws a clearer spotlight on life than this old Book with its searching emphasis on motive, its broad principles and its plain commands. When you look at life in the

light of certain verses and passages, like "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you"; or "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"; or "If any man come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me"—verses which plainly are speaking of the total investment of life—the issues are clearer. As we read day after day, let us keep checking up whether we are finding and doing the will of God. Let our Bibles guide our lives. There breathes a spirit in that Book which solves all things. Jesus gave no panaceas, but He communicates an attitude towards life in which things become transparent—duties emerge, small things look small, big things look big, and men know.

6. Guidance is not always conscious. You may not find out till a long time afterwards that God has been leading you. The will of God is like the path of a ship, not the track of a railroad: you do not see the way laid out plainly before you as far as eye can reach, but you see the wake when you look behind you, and you know that the evidence of the leading of God is unmistakable. There are times when one does not "feel" anything special and a decision must be made. If we are honest throughout, and have done our best, that decision will prove one day to have been the right one to make at the time. Many of us can look back, as time goes on, and see the pattern which we have been weaving, begin to emerge; and we know that for us it is the pattern that was intended. There have been wonderful indications of God's leading in the lives of all who have ever given their wills to Him—just the right person coming into our life at just the right time, or the way opening up just when we need

to have it so. God's hand is upon every life which makes Him welcome.

Sometimes men are in duty bound to consider family obligations. A widowed mother, young brothers and sisters who have yet to be educated when the family income is small, reversals of family fortune—God must see this and want us to make up our minds partly with reference to it. Only this can be said, that literally dozens of men go into the ministry every year to whom this more or less applies, and who manage to surmount the difficulties by working and studying together, by spreading the training over a longer time, by receiving the help of scholarship money from seminaries which has been given for that purpose. There are no fortunes made in the ministry, but men can usually take care of their families decently. We have been speaking of honest need. Now let us see the other side of family hindrance. Here is a family of nice, reasonable church people, none too hot in their enthusiasm, but they pay their dues and come to church. Their son hears a stirring appeal about the ministry or the mission field, and they tell him to let somebody's else son go! In a school where I was preaching I met a dashing matron who urged me not to say too much of the ministry or mission field to her son. She assured me there was "plenty to be done right here at home," and she thought we had had "enough of Woodrow Wilson's doing for other nations for a while." And I had to say to her that the matter with the world was that we had not had anything like enough, and that if her son felt it a call to go as a minister of Christ to a non-Christian land, and be a link of understanding and brotherliness between that country and our own, I certainly hoped he would go.

If your family really needs you, the will of God will not neglect them. But if they are subtly filching your heart away from the best you know because they want somebody to look after their family money and increase it, then be as civil as you can and pay no attention to them.

It has perhaps been run into the ground that the call is not "some voice out of the blue." A physical voice, that could be recorded on a graphophone or a wireless—of course not! But an urge from without, a warm, impelling, God-implanted thought? Yes! if you have been making honest search. I care not what you call it, something comes to men and women who linger about the precincts of prayer which comes to no others. Because their whole lives are frankly dependent on God, and because they have learned to trust in Him as a Father, this kind of guidance is only to be expected; and when it comes it brings with it a peace of assurance, and a fire of commission, which is nowhere else to be found. God does speak to men through their own inward hearts and voices, as He does through the mouths of other men, and when that call comes, men fare forth into the world and say, "Thus saith the Lord!" After the awareness of need has made its impression, there gathers a deepening sense of duty, and men know that God has spoken.

The call, then, is a recognition of need and a willingness to meet that need if it be within our power. Men have been called in all ages and times since they first began to trust in a God who cared about the concerns of men; the calling of individual men is but a corollary to a belief in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of them have been very dramatic and overwhelming—the larger part have been still small voices which made unanswerable appeal to conscientious

men. The reason most men hear no call is that they are not within calling distance, have not given their wills wholly to God, nor preoccupied their minds with these things. Every life should expect this high dignity of a special commission, and feel wanting if it has not come, not blaming God for their own laxness but rising up at once to seek His will. The stubborn wills of men are the chief hindrance to men knowing God's will. "If any man willeth to do, he shall know. . . ."*

Now let me be personal and tell you of the very simple way my own call has come.

I have always believed that Jesus Christ knows more about living than any one else who ever tried it. That thought has never forsaken me. I went through the usual period of intellectual readjustment, when the faith which my family had given me became my own faith; but I never seriously doubted that Jesus Christ was vastly superior to any whom I heard slurring Him, and the many whom I saw ignoring Him. He seemed to me, and has always seemed to me, the most altogether enchanting Person I have ever met. He seemed to know how to keep sweet, how to turn difficult corners, how to meet testy people and testy situations, how to get on and be happy in the midst of trouble, and to keep first things first no matter how pressing were other claims, as no one else I ever heard of. And then I looked about me and saw a great many people who seemed to me to be failing miserably in the business of living; I was one of them. Some called themselves Christians and did not quite ring true; some of them did not, and they were all missing the mark. Then I happened to be thrown with some men whose service in the Kingdom of God has been great, and they struck me as being the

* St. John 7:17.

most worth-while men I had ever met. I wanted to be like them. They were happy and unselfish and useful. People in trouble went to them and were helped. They did not lose their temper, and they did not lose their heads. They seemed to be propelled by a vast Power outside themselves. And I knew that I myself, and those whom I saw missing the way, needed to be got into touch with that Power. And when I tried it, and found peace and power in it, I said, "This is too good to keep!" and I went into the profession whose business it is to keep people from missing the track in life, by showing them The Way.

THE NEED

CHAPTER IV

THE NEED

WE are going to consider now the need for the work which the ministry can best do, and therefore the need for more men of the right sort to come into the ministry to do it.

As I watch people, it seems to me that there emerge three spiritual instincts, comparable to the instincts of the body, which are continually demanding satisfaction; three realms in which the soul of man is on a still-hunt for reality. We want *explanation*, we want *inward peace*, and we want *dynamic*.

I say we want explanation. We are wondering animals beset with a belief that life ought to mean something, and that the discovery of this something is beyond the yield of ordinary living and comes to rare people, or to ordinary people only in rare moments. We are haunted with a desire to explore life, to find some reason for it, some plan in it, some purpose behind it, some destiny before it. It does not cast its secrets in our way. Few can look life squarely in the face, and come from the view of it satisfied and unafraid. We have got to find significance in it. Men shrivel into animals and go mad and die for want of this, and they thaw and thrive and live abundantly when they find it.

Then we crave inward peace. Only those who see the generality of men at close range, and know their hearts and their homes, can possibly know the truth that

lies here. The rich protect themselves with padding; the intellectuals find solace in an ideal labor; the ordinary man hunts success, and looks indifferent. But tragedies lie behind those bland faces. The world is full of people who have been badgered and beaten by life, driven like drift-wood on a beach. Life has been hard on them. They were perhaps born with an incomplete equipment; the scuffle and competition of the world absorbs all their energy; a few of them crawl away into lonely and loveless places where a word of sympathy and a deed of kindness is a fortune to them. You may take it at any place in the scale, and who has not been bruised and hurt and misunderstood, who has not needed a retreat, somewhere to nestle and cuddle, somewhere to "complain" as the Psalmist put it, when the storms of life were more than could be endured? Sorrow comes with a great variety but with a strange impartiality. And when it strikes, men crave inward peace.

And then we need dynamic. Whatever life may be, philosophically considered, whatever inner world we may seek in case of trouble, here is life—it has to be got on with. Out of our musings upon the wherefore of it, back from our attempts to fly from it, we come again to it as it is, and know that we must carry on. One finds amongst the most prosperous people in the world sometimes a want of enthusiasm in the prosecution of life which literally makes him wonder why there are so few suicides. Only dull habit keeps them going. They have no sense of mission, no urge, no thrill. I have found oftentimes in people who by training should be equipped for the campaigns of life a hopelessness about the conquest of even petty faults in themselves, which will forever prevent their occupying themselves with

those great issues which lie beyond and call for the mastership of men who have mastered themselves. Inertia, spiritual anemia, the failure to discover the blood of the soul in some great dynamic—here is the cause of many of these living dead men in the world. And he alone is a success in life who, having found that with which to conquer himself, sets out to meet the foes of humanity in the Name of the Lord. Yes, men want dynamic.

Now it is the supreme task of religion to deal with these great needs in all their aspects, collective and individual. Science may make its contribution to the thought and comfort and energy of the world, but science, because it deals with processes and not with origins and destinies, can never give men final clues to life; cannot comfort them in their misery and cannot reach into their lives with moral power. The ultimate things belong to religion. And to think deeply and wisely and practically for and in behalf of people; to heal and console and watch with them in hours of darkness, when there may be none else to watch; and to build up lives, to put new incentive into them, and set them on their way rejoicing and giving joy—this is the business of the ministry, and it takes the best energy of the best men to make even a faint attempt to do it. There must be a group of men set apart as servants of society who have the leisure to study and think in its behalf about these great matters on which the hopes of men ultimately depend. And because the life of a minister is continually given to those activities which, while ignoring no facts of misery and pain, yet emphasize what is bright and worth-while and of eternal value in life; because his life is planted deep amongst his people, and is the most fully shared life in all the community, there-

fore, he should increasingly become the richest and mellowest personality in his neighborhood, literally the father of his flock. No other man has such a privilege in helping people to bear their burdens; no other man is so charged of God to cry against injustice and evil with the same basis of love; no other man so sums up in himself and interprets for his people the highest and best aspirations of their lives, as does the minister of Christ, when he is doing the work which he was called to do.

The ministry stands for the transcendence of personality in the midst of a society which always tends more or less to fall into the grip of *things*. Men in the ministry are set as Watchmen, to point to men the way—the old, old and ever new way—of the Master, which old folks love and children understand, and sophisticated people miss because it is so plain. We are set as Shepherds, to cheer and comfort, to be always loving, always carrying their sorrows in our hearts close to His joy, to give *all* of ourselves night and day for our people. And we are set as Prophets, to blaze where fire is wanted, to call where a challenge is wanted, to speak the thrilling words of God to jaded hearts in a jaded generation, to draw from men the heroic and Christlike, to scorch the evil and draw down the blessing of God upon the good. And this, because men and women are of infinite value and know that their hearts are never at rest until they rest in God. These are eternal needs. They will last while men live. They have arisen as the fundamental needs of every generation. And, more than any other work to which a man can give himself, the ministry busies itself with meeting these needs.

But there are certain more temporary needs, which belong especially to our own day, and demand the consideration of men who mean to serve their generation.

And the first is that the Church has lost its hold. People do not feel towards the Church as they did fifty years ago, and there is no use blinking at it. Some think this augurs well for a better substitute being provided for the Church; but a very little thought will bring to mind the fact that starting "something else" has been tried many times, and has usually resulted simply in the formation of another denomination, or another "religion." The Christian Church is altogether too big to be supplanted by a substitute, more can be done from within than from without. I do not say that Christianity would not survive the annihilation of the Church as it stands; but I do say that the organization which above all others has cared for Christ and His principles has been the Church, and that if His will is to prevail in the earth we had better do something with this organization which bears His Name.

Some have left the Church because it seems the popular thing to do. They have made the momentous discovery that God wont strike them over the head with a thunderbolt if they don't come, and they can "get along" without it. Some have left because frankly the Church held up to them an ideal of life which was too high for them; coming to Church was a continuous annoyance because it kept reminding them of the disparity between their lives and their real ideals, and the issue of Christ was too sharp. There is a more dignified group which has left because of what they call "dogmas." One wants to say to these good people that there exist rather wide shades of opinion in the Church, and in men who are fully loyal to Jesus Christ and call Him Lord and Master. Many believe that an early lot of bishops and bigwigs got together and drew up a theology, as I heard of a school-boy "drawing up a set of traditions"

for his school. Doctrines grow out of experience; if people would approach the question by the front door, and first make spiritual discoveries for themselves, they would see why some of us believe in a definite body of Christian truth.

But the group which ought to give us the most concern is that which has left for none of these reasons. They have gone because they found us wanting. I do not refer to that large and shallow group of people who say we are all hypocrites; I refer to that small group of people who are really Christ's people, and love His kind of life, for whom we have not made room, whom we have scandalized by insisting on some puny unessential and neglecting the weighty matters. It has not been denial from without that has done the mischief, but betrayal from within. They have seen sham and snobbishness during the hour of worship, when surely the spirit of Christ should be on us all. They have found vestrymen and pillars without spiritual enthusiasm, unwilling to see Christ's principles applied in their own business. They have seen plaster preachers, with tame ways and queer clothes, and heard them preach tepid, impossible pap from Christ's pulpits, or stroke a fat congregation with the rewards of a virtuous life and the blessedness of immortality, while two blocks away lie great festering sores of huddled humanity without a decent chance to draw a breath of clean air. And they have said, "We can't swallow that, and we won't!"

Now there are two ways for a young man to treat this great need in the church. One is to quit and run; the other is to stick by and see what can be done. The latter seems to me not only the less cowardly, but the most effective generally if there is to be any concerted effort to make things better. The man who turns his

back on a situation like this, refusing his own help, walks away protesting his intention to "do something about it." How many of them hold to that promise?

Consider the needs of our national life to-day. There is warfare between classes. Every one who sees beneath the surface at all knows that large numbers of working men are awaiting their chance to get even with those who have held the money; and that the men with money have often been as crooked as they dared be, paying less than living wages to men who could not defend themselves, and concentrating the power into their own hands. The adjustments of these conflicts is exceedingly difficult, and calls for men trained in other fields than the ministry. But they can only be adjusted *at all* in the solvent atmosphere of fairness and justice, where men look upon men as brothers, and not as tools on the one hand and tyrants on the other. Back of all solutions of particular problems lie principles; and what we lack to-day in the handling of these vast social problems is principle. Somebody must keep us thinking straight. These interests have got to become more aware of "the other side." Capitalists and laborers have got to think differently if they are to get together. Wherever a fair and friendly spirit has arisen, and a liberal offer of co-operation has been made, there has been made the beginning of the construction of that cantilever bridge, which, being built up gradually from both sides, will finally meet in a united structure. But this has depended upon the attitude of men in power on both sides. Somebody must keep our attitudes right.

And we must face a grave situation as to personal morals as well as social. The war only hastened a process of decline in personal ideals which had begun already, and which usually follows a wave of unbelief.

While the masses of people go on believing, a handful of philosophers and professors and modernists form and propound a lot of negative ideas about religion, knock the pillars from under our feet, and give us no substitute. These thinkers are for the most part honorable and high-minded men, and remain so. After a season the masses catch wind of these ideas, and they are widely disseminated; it means freedom from restraint for many of them if these ideas be true, and ultimately it means the sort of looseness which stalks about the land to-day in the guise of liberty. Only a very little wisdom is wanted to see that the paradox of this modern "independence" is that it does not make free men but slaves—slaves to vanity, slaves to pleasure, slaves to bodily sensuality, slaves to money, slaves to boredom, and finally, slaves to despair. Modern society is sick of itself. It is bored to death. It is on a chase for happiness which it never will find until it learns that happiness does not consist in doing what you please, but in what you ought; that supreme happiness comes when individual human lives are spiritually broken up and rearranged so that what they please and what they ought are one and the same thing!

"No heart is pure that is not passionate,
No virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic,"

wrote Seeley. And it is when we can make goodness as thrilling as badness *looks*, when the promptings of conscience and the dictates of reason and the leap of desire coincide, that we have true independence. It is this sort of goodness after which Christianity strives, and which it has created in the lives of its greatest saints. The trouble with much of what the Church is producing

to-day in the lives of its people is its intolerable stupidity. Christianity can be interesting—in fact *Christianity* is always interesting. We have got to go to people with the absolute assurance that we can beat the hedonist on his own ground; that there is more fun in being a Christian than in doing any other thing on earth! I see no other way to wean people away from these broken cisterns to which they turn to-day, and come off so thirsty and so unsatisfied. There was a day when men would answer the call to duty. To-day there is abroad a deal of pragmatism—much of which I think healthy—and which simply asks to be shown that Christianity “works.” But men will answer the challenge of great ideals as much as ever, if they see that in them lies the discovery of joy and well-being for themselves and for their society.

But if this redemption of the personal and corporate life of men is to be the chief business of the ministry, then there is an especial need for the spiritualizing of the work of the ministry.

By the time the average minister is through with his accounts, his letters, his classes, his reports, his round of visits, he has little time left for the most important and fruitful and precious part of his work—intimate personal touch with people. He keeps promising himself that one day he will get atop of his routine and begin this more important work of spiritual dealing with individuals. But how often does the day come in any minister’s life? I know not many ministers who do spiritual work for anything like a reasonable portion of their time. I go further: the average minister is not at home in the presence of a human soul in need, and avoids intimate dealings because it is not his “way” or “line.” I have been making a search amongst my

colleagues for men who *do* think it is their "way" to deal personally, to get to grips with people, to do the fundamental thing for them and get them to surrender themselves unconditionally to God, and—I must be honest—I can only find a small handful of them. If it is not the most important work of the ministry, what is? It is interesting to try and learn what are the reasons why so few men do spiritual work, and I believe I have found four:

1. Some men are reticent and shy. This may come from an honest fear of dealing at close grips with people, and is to be overcome by admitting the ineffectualness of ordinary religious work and by honest trial of something more vital, or it may come from giving in to temperamental limitations which could be overcome by honest trial.

2. Some men honestly do not know how to go about it; it has not been expected by their churches that they should know much of dealing with individuals. Their seminary did not teach them (and most seminaries are pitifully wanting in teachers who understand the hearts of men). They want a method. But there shall no method be given any man but the method of experiment, dealing with what he finds, not being fooled by appearances, learning by experience.

3. Some men are sincere in their desire to do good, but they have never found anything spiritually electric themselves, and therefore have nothing to give.

4. Some men are just unconverted, hiding sin in some cases, and fighting bitterly against those who want spiritual work done in the church because it will show them up. (I hate to say this, but I know that it is true, and I do not want to keep it from

young men who are considering the ministry. One of the shocks to a man as he comes first into the ministry is the amount of politics and office-seeking and moral mischief which goes on. If you come into the ministry, don't come with your hands folded. Come with some disinfectant in one hand, and a street-broom in the other: come in to *clean*, and begin with yourself.)

The great crying need of the Christian church today is for the original first hand spiritual pioneer who blazes trails. We have got too many tame, time-serving, ecclesiastical fellows who can keep up a system, but too few who believe that the Holy Spirit still makes men new and wants full sway over them. There are growing endowments, institutions, organizations—a great many more office desks, multiplied machinery, drives and funds. But I find a conspicuous absence of the sort of men who are themselves so redolent with the grace of God that they re-create the lives they touch. It will be a sorry Christianity fifty years hence if we do not strike for a deeper personal consecration than the churches have been producing, expecting, or even preaching of late. We have moved a long way in the religious realm in the past half century; but let not the modern Christian think there is any easier way than some of those of an earlier generation took to find God. There was a richness about the spiritual life of our grandparents, even when it was narrow, which came from the depth of their consecration. We may progress till the end, we shall never get away from the need for absolute self-surrender to God as the “vital turning point of the religious life.”* And while this is hazily alluded to

* William James.

in a variety of sermons, it is almost never dealt with explicitly. The average middle-aged Christian has never grasped the idea to which you refer when you speak about self-surrender to God. Pardon a personal reference: I was twenty-four years old before I "got" that idea at all, and then it was from a man outside my own Church: and I have done my share of church-going since I was a very small boy. We have got heaps of men in the ministry who can salve us and talk generally to us. God send us some men to *convict* us, to make us face the full claims of Christ, to show us the need for surrender to Him as being the fundamental thing that it is!

And then I see a great fissure in the modern church which needs to be healed. On one side are a group of men vigorously holding to an old interpretation, fearing the dogmatism of science, reverencing the Bible, with a deep desire to preserve the essence of the evangelical experience, and a rich piety and devotion to Christ. On the other side I see a group which is frankly scientific, intellectual in its approach, keen for social Christianity, a fuller program of religious education, modern, and possessed of almost as much sympathy with enlightened social workers as with the followers of Christ. Both these groups root strongly in Christ, and one is emphasizing one-half of His teaching, the personal side; the other another half, the social side. And some enemy has been bedeviling our minds with the belief that these are irreconcilable positions, and there can be no peace between them! But I see no real opposition here. I do not see how any Christian with a "social conscience" intends to do without Christ; and I do not see how any disciple of His can fail to want the full blaze of His light to shine in every corner of

our corporate life. But to heal this apparent rift, we must raise up men of ripe spiritual experience, men with a vivid social vision which lies parallel to a vivid personal Christ. We need scholarly men who will not lose the sense of moral need in the world; and deep drivers against personal and social sin who will fit themselves by the most rigidly accurate scholarship. We want neither the anemic "liberal," with his own little brand of dogmatism, and frequently spiritually bankrupt himself, continually hunting out obscurantism in all his friends, warning them how much of their faith is exploded; nor yet do we want the ancient camel-swallowing reactionary, who refuses sound critical knowledge and the real findings of science, and bolsters up his faith by an appeal to a bygone past. We want neither the half-seeing exponent of social Christianity alone, nor the bigoted champion of personal religion alone. We need—God send them to us!—men who will brood seriously upon the mysteries of life and religion, face facts and deal honestly with our minds; but men who have drunk deeply of the springs of life that are in Christ Jesus, and who know that this involves them both in a profound personal commitment to Him and also to a whole purpose to heal the hideous and wide cleavages among men with His reconciling power. The ministry of the future must join together in holy wedlock all that is established in modern science with the eternal spiritual experience; the demand of the soul for a personal hold on God with the demand of collective men for a just social organization: the findings of psychology with that ancient and never-to-be-lost appeal to clear decision for Christ. Men are not brains on the end of hatpins, nor naked wills, nor isolated hearts; men are whole personalities. Because religion is a relationship, and be-

cause we do not discover our friends with any one faculty, but with all, we must keep the challenge of religion a challenge to the whole man. We must stop making divisions where none exist. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder!

The call to the modern ministry means, then, that a man must be prepared to grapple not only with the hostility and indifference of the world, but with lukewarmness, obscurantism, and fear of her own message in the Church itself. He can take nothing for granted. He must think through his theology for himself; he must beat out his message upon the touchstone of spiritual experience in his own life and the lives of others with whom he deals; and he must be prepared for painful misunderstandings with those who wish to keep Christianity in leash and the Church on the fence. Some one wrote of an island in the seas, "It was astonishing to find how tame the wild animals were!" And what a lot of milk-and-water we must seem to some of the apostles as they look down over the battlements at us who call ourselves apostolic!

It wants men for this work, men of larger calibre and broader gauge than we have been getting. We have got to rid ourselves at all costs of men with insular and parochial minds, with no inter-church and inter-national and inter-racial sympathy. We must have men who cannot be stampeded by popular clamor to forsake Christ's message. We must have men who see farther than their generation, and do not fear to call back to their fellows, "Come on!" We must have men who will preach a whole Gospel, in all its vivid beauty, and all its exhaustive demands upon men's lives. This world needs radical transformation of outlook and aim; it needs conviction of its social ills which will no longer

accept these wretched divisions of humanity into warring camps; and it needs conviction of its personal sin which will mean human hearts made over in a process so drastic that Christ called it being born again. And what man is sufficient for these things? We need to lay down the call to the very ablest men in universities, who have proved their capacity and leadership, and say, "Here is a work which will take more sheer ability than your university successes ever called for. You can only begin to do it as you lay yourself upon Christ's altar, and seek His utmost help. Are you willing to face it?" And when we get the best men, utterly dedicated to Christ, we shall have a converted and converting ministry.

One word more. You may grant these needs, and yet say you can do more outside than in the Church. Perhaps you can; it will certainly be true of a proportion of men who read this book. But let me ask you how many laymen you know who began life with that assumption, went into some other work, and have not kept the promise they made themselves? If Christian responsibility means only being nice and reasonable and moderately generous and more or less sympathetic with people in trouble, it matters little where you serve. But if your Christianity means a living touch with a living Christ, if you have learned from Him of His desire to come into the lives of all men as their Master, to have them for His own; if you feel that He is indispensable in life, so that everything else beside Him is really unimportant, then I ask you to consider that the day has in it but twenty-four hours; that the best hours of the best days of the best years of your life you will be engaged in good work, but work which it may be extremely difficult to infuse with His spirit in such

fashion as to make a deep mark upon lives about you. It takes time to know people, to understand them, to love them, to change them. It can be done by men in every walk of life—thank God that in every walk some men do it with the same carefulness that they use in all their work. But most of us do just about one thing—we skimp the extras. This country needs Christ. The world needs Christ. He is so badly needed at this juncture that we must have many men working for Him on full time. Give us the leaders of the next generation, carefully trained, steeped in a deep discovery of Jesus Christ, as points where He can touch mankind, and we shall make America and the world a place where Jesus Christ will feel at home!

THE REWARD

CHAPTER V

THE REWARD

THE question, "What are the compensations of the ministry?" is bound to be asked. To go into the ministry is certainly not the ordinary thing to do. It means often changing plans, leaving home, drawing away from the occupations of one's friends, sacrificing certain satisfactions which most men want to enjoy. Wherein lies the reward?

There is, first, the reward of a clear conscience in the giving of one's life. Of course it is possible to come into the ministry with ulterior motives, looking for big parishes, or easy places, or bishoprics, or what-not. And it is possible to come without being willing to face up, for example, to the need in the mission field, or of some hard field at home for which men cannot be secured. But a man has the satisfaction of knowing that the work to which he has given himself is the highest work in the world, because it deals with the highest side of people's natures. He is perfectly sure, whatever his own aims may be, that the aims of his profession are single-minded and pure. He cannot "get anything out of it," unless it be a soft job where he can loaf without anybody knowing it. There is something very sustaining in that thought. For the time comes in every man's life when he runs against enough mischief and deviltry to make him question the motives and aims of

many people; and to have hitched his wagon to a star, to know that the great examples of his profession are not Nero nor Napoleon nor Cæsar Borgia nor any of the wreckers of human peace and welfare, but Francis and Tauler and Wesley and Paul and the great Master Himself—this is a good deal, and it will keep him up when the trials of life sweep round him like drowning waves.

Another compensation (a curious one some will say) is the compensation of almost enforced simple living. Immediately there comes to my mind a fat priestly gentleman, with a penchant for good dinners; but he is markedly the exception. The bulk of men in the ministry live plainly and sensibly. All this talk about “not enough to live on” is greatly overdone; men who are worth their salt are paid enough to live on, though not to get rich on. I like to think of it this way: that a group of Christian people get together and agree to give a man enough to keep him going, so that he may have the privilege of serving them. Of course a man in the ministry is not paid for his work. You can never pay the doctor who saves your life, nor the teacher who arouses your mind, nor the minister, who by the grace of God, somehow is the means of making God a reality to you. This is beyond price; money and this are absolutely incommensurate. But all these people must live; and so the hospital and the school and the church give them a stipend, and let them enjoy the fun of service. When I say that simple living is a compensation, I mean that a man is saved the temptation to be interested in money. We say that it is not money but the love of it which causes so much trouble; but money has a way of making you love it in spite of yourself. The reason it is possible for very snobbish people to say that “the middle-classes

are very happy" is that the bulk of people are not bedeviled on the one hand by poverty, nor on the other by riches. They have enough to live on simply—and that always makes for happiness and general efficiency. That is why ministers live to such an unconscionable old age—they have worked hard and lived simply.

And this brings us to another compensation—the variety and constancy of *work*. Personally I do better work when I do not keep at it in too long stretches. Depend upon it that, while you are a curate at least, you will do no work in long stretches. One is often fresher at his work if he changes its type now and then through the day. And you will study and receive a caller and visit a hospital and read a book and write a sermon and be used to turn a life toward Christ, all in one day oftentimes. And it is unending, the pressure of it. I believe this is true of all the finest callings. A doctor seldom has a *quite* easy vacation—there is always some old lady who may be gone when he gets back, or may call him back before his time is up. So with a minister. Day and night he is at the call of his people. He wants to be. "For this end was I born," he says to himself again and again, if he truly feels his call. And when, late at night, he is ready to throw himself into bed, the telephone rings and he is called to a sickroom by someone who wants him and nobody else, he goes faithfully and unquestioningly. It is the greatest privilege on earth to live out one's life with reference to people, especially to a group of people who have been entrusted to him as his very own. But if he is to have somewhat to give, there must be times of refreshment and intaking. He needs his quiet-hour every morning with time leisurely abundant for God to touch him afresh: but he needs also longer times when God can fill him up, dis-

tilling truth from the needles of the pine or the rushing of the mountain brook. One has to be sensible and not cut off one's service by frantic exertion, so that one grows old in the prime of life. And yet, to be serving on full time, to know that even one's rest is taken in preparation for his work—this is a mighty joy and a powerful compensation.

I want to speak also of the joy of watching people grow up spiritually. It used to be a thrilling thing in China to watch the rapidity with which my schoolboys learned, and their eagerness in learning. One does not often have the privilege of watching rapid growth, for most growth is slow. But to see a religious idea take root in a man's life, to watch him begin to test it and live by it, and find its truth in experience, here is a very profound satisfaction. When you suggest to a man that he write down in a book the guiding thoughts that come to him in his quiet hour in the morning—and one day he comes in with perfect jewels of spiritual truth and shyly and smilingly reads some of them to you, you feel a tingle all through your heart. Awhile ago I saw a man whom I had not seen nor talked with about spiritual things for some time. When we had parted before religion was something of a haze to him—it lacked clear, crisp outline. And as we began our talk, I found a golden thread emerging which had woven itself through all his thinking—and that thread was the certainty and the reality of the will of God. He had got it! And, above all, when some lad has been himself born again, and he takes your promises at their face value, and knows that God wants to win men through him, and goes out and wins one of his own friends to Christ, and comes to tell you about it, you are moved with so great a humbleness and thanksgiving that you can just give

God the praise, and marvel why men do not allow themselves more of this holy joy.

Then there is what I can only call the uniqueness of the work of the ministry, which is in itself a considerable satisfaction. You are doing for people what absolutely nobody else even attempts to do. They know it is the greatest thing in their lives, the thing they want most. It bears the same relation to what all other people can do for them that saving their child from drowning bears to filling their cellar with coal—it is simply infinitely more important. They will not turn to any one else for the kind of help they expect from you. If some problem is pressing on them—perhaps the threat of a broken home—to whom can they go who will be disinterested enough to see it all fairly, and interested enough to give them counsel and help? Incredibly personal questions they will bring to you. You will live in the midst of the heavy burdens of others. It is by far the most wearing thing in the ministry to listen to story after story of tragedy and misfortune and folly and sin; to give yourself with sympathy and intelligence to each one, attempting to hew a way out for this distressed soul which cannot hew its own way out alone. But this, which draws the energy from you as though it were taking the blood from your veins, is the glory and the crowning chance of your work; either you will help that person, or he will go unhelped. The unchurched seldom try more than one minister, if he fails them, they are through. But if he can withdraw his wits from a dozen other preoccupations and give himself utterly to this person and his need, and if he can bring order and peace out of chaos and pain, then be it known to him in his innermost soul that he has done God's work that day and maybe saved a soul alive. These intimacies are

unique to the ministry; even a doctor only hears those which bear upon his dealing with the case, unless he has acquired also that glorious pastoral quality which makes a few doctors perhaps the most perfect Christians in the world. People look to a man in the ministry, and lean on him, for the kind of help which only God can give; all through his day one is sending up little prayers of thanksgiving for the marvelous chances which come, and of earnest petition that they may be met in the spirit and strength of the Christ.

Some men will want to know what their associates in the ministry are like. Well, some of your brothers will be weak sisters. Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross remarked once that the trouble with about half the clergy is that they look as though they were descended from a long line of maiden aunts. You will find amongst them little theological pundits, twittering ecclesiastical gossips who can tell you the name of every little piece of church ornament and furniture that was ever invented and the last word in parish scandal, and never felt a drop of prophetic blood course through their veins. To the end of your life it will be irksome to be classed with some of these chaps. But this can easily be, and has often been, run into the ground. There is the other side—men who by their industry and patience and love and sacrifice shame you and do you good! There comes to my mind a friend with whom it has been my privilege to work in the ministry, who slaves night and day as near the breaking point as a man dare without ruining his health altogether—giving, giving, giving. I have seen him come home with a look in his eyes which marks him as so identified with the burdens of his people that I have had the words come pouring into my mind, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" One day as he

stood telling me of the tragedy of the lonely immigrant, tears standing in his eyes, the verse came powerfully upon me, "Jesus wept." There *will* be men in the ministry who, by laziness and silly fault-finding and party spirit, will try your very soul. But there will also be men like this, the latchets of whose shoes you will not be worthy to touch. They are the lights of the world, and I tell you it is an honor to be their colleagues. To be thrown with them, and to work with them, is one of the very greatest joys of the ministry.

Though it may be misunderstood, I want to speak also of the chance which the ministry gives a man for self-development. I am not now speaking about getting ahead and making a mark and setting the world on fire. I am speaking of that reasonable and necessary projection of a man's education into the earlier years, and if possible through all the years, of his life's work. We must *be* somewhat ere we can *give*. The world is desperately in need of what Dr. Harris Kirk is fond of calling "fertile personalities." The enrichment of the mind, the extension of interests into varied fields, contact with many kinds of personalities and phases of life, co-operation in public interests—this tends to create a large-calibre man. And Phillips Brooks once made a remark to the effect that the Christian ministry afforded the greatest opportunity for the development of a human soul that this world had to offer. If our lives are to be effective throughout, and to accomplish the maximum of which they are capable, we must be in a work which while it drains us will also restock us; and there is something like a self-storing battery about the ministry. For continually out of your work you are drawing fresh ideas and inspiration and an enlargement of vision to put back into your work. So comes

growth; and a young man must fight, during the earlier years of his ministry, to keep open many lines of study and interest. Dr. Hugh Black has said that as a man grows older he hears the sound of doors shutting on all sides of him; he realizes increasingly the number of things he can no longer do. We have got to keep burnished and ready and apt for a continually greater and greater work. If you want your life always functioning up to capacity, consider the ministry seriously, for it has more than once made a big man out of a small one.

I should like also to say, if it does not sound too intimate, that it is wonderful fun working with God. There is something thrilling always about being on the winning side, especially the side that ought to win. The ministry soon gives a man the feeling of a fight. When he knows the wreck of sin and ignorance and abuse in the lives of humanity, he comes to "hate evil," and to love God Who hates evil. Now it is also thrilling to be under a great leader. What then is the enthusiasm with which a man falls into the war of God against wrong? Of course we are not very high in the command: there is the beauty of it, rank doesn't count for much except behind the lines where there is no fighting. God is fighting against all the foes of humanity—disease, oppression, sin, ignorance. And we are in the thick of it unless we are false to our trust. I doubt if there is any more ennobling feeling in the world than to know that God is conspiring with you in the winning of a life for Christ. You will be amazed at the amount of direction He will give when you listen, at the way He will answer prayer if it has been brought into captivity to "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine," at the way He will have already begun His gracious

work in the heart of that person to whom He sends you with His invitation. If any man ever has any persistent doubt of God it will be dispelled by an earnest trial of individual work with individuals. The co-operation of God is unmistakable—and it is glorious.

But when a man works on apostolic lines he may expect apostolic treatment, and he will get it. Jesus never courted opposition. He just lived the kind of life that attracted it as a magnet does steel. The apostles for the most part seem not to have been irritating men, but they irritated, none the less, the religious respectables of their day. I am always a little disconcerted when I find a minister has no enemies; I doubt if he has been preaching the gospel straight enough. Old-headed ecclesiastics, comfortable congregations, and very well-paid clerics generally, do not much care for drastic preaching or action. A young man is warned more than once by them to put on the brakes. And if he does not, he is called wrong-headed, self-seeking, insubordinate. So precisely did the friends and family of the Master Himself seek to dissuade Him, subtly and slyly, from what became the salvation of the world. There will be enemies in the church and out of it; some will honestly think you wrong and be frank about it; some will knife you behind your back and “say all manner of evil against you falsely.” The convicted, to whom you have exposed his fault, whether he be in the church or outside, will sometimes do you mischief until that conviction becomes conversion. Christianity is no easier to preach or practise than it ever was, it is only a fake brand that gets no persecution. The world loves Christ, in a sense: but He disturbs them, and then they crucify Him. If you do all that one of His prophets is meant to do, you may be sure of drawing

down on yourself the fire of a few of your most respectable superiors and colleagues. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you . . . so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." He put us in good company! Give men the "whole counsel of God," and you will have precisely what the Master said you would have, "an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children, and lands, *with persecutions*: and in the world to come eternal life."*

You see, all the compensation of the ministry is of this high and rather strenuous sort. You cannot *lie down* in Christianity, as you cannot in a cold bath: the exhilaration is too great. Day after day I have watched men scurrying down town to their business, who were getting twice, three times, ten times what I was getting in salary, and I was getting twice, three times, ten times what they were getting in deep-down human satisfaction. They get their pay in cash: I get mine in gratitude and human sympathy and understanding, in the joy of seeing lives renewed. And this is being rich, if you know what it means to be rich!

Now and then a man will express to me his mortal fear of becoming what he calls a "small-town" minister. (N. B. This does not mean the minister of a little community, but one who is not very much of a man.) Well, all I have got to say is, consider your "small-town" business man. He gets up in his suburban home and catches the subway to his office. He smokes his cigar and expresses his political opinions and his view of the stock-market. He cleans up his affairs and takes his way to the country at five o'clock. On Saturday afternoons he dons his knickers and plays golf. As his

* St. Mark 10:30.

business progresses in scale, so do his motors, his wife's dresses, his children's schools, his house, his servants. The children marry well, and grow up to have children and homes and businesses exactly like their father's. I just want to ask whether this is markedly more *eminent* than being an ordinary minister? The truth is that small-town people will be small-town anywhere, and men of intellectual and spiritual distinction will soon get it known without needing to tell folks about it. Most of us will not be very long remembered after we are gone; and I, for one, prefer to make the investment of my life in the things that will not perish, in the immortal stuff of human character. And there are a whole lot of men, some of whom have yet to find it out, who just never will have as good a time anywhere else on earth as they will have in the ministry.

AN APPEAL

CHAPTER VI

AN APPEAL*

SOMETHING is wrong with Christianity as we practise it to-day. There is lack somewhere. People who call themselves Christians differ little from those who do not. They have lost distinction, spiritual eminence. They are an ineffectual minority in the world's affairs—they who have the only secret for a solution. Somehow Christianity has not arrived in our lives, or in our civilization. There has been a great dereliction.

We are out of touch with God, and have lost the sense of His immediate guidance. We have failed to find His will for our lives, and we are floundering. Our plans are self-made. Our lives are self-directed. Our energy is self-generated. We are planning national and social and personal panaceas in our own way. We are trying to readjust a maladjusted world in our own way. We attempt to order our spirits and our homes and our nation in our own way. We are of the tame crowd which, professing loyalty, misrepresents Christ to His world. Something is desperately wrong.

The unhappiness of men lies mostly in this, that they are without commissions from God to do the thing which they are doing. Small ideas and little causes have been chosen for life-investment, and they grow stale and

* Reprinted in part from an article in *The Intercollegian*, January, 1922, under the title "My Life-Work and My Will."

turn sour on our hands. They are not worth fighting for. We are tired of them before we begin. They do not hold men's attention long enough for them really to get interested. We know that the character-values, in us and in others, are the only eternal thing. Yet men give themselves to all sorts of things which perish and rot and bore. Half the men scrambling for a livelihood were meant for great servants of human kind, and would be happy in high, hard callings, where the hours are long, the days too short, the work plenty and the rest spare. It would stretch their limbs instead of cramping them. It would distend their hearts to capacity instead of shriveling them.

Why do men in such numbers miss the way of life? I think it is because few of them grasp the idea that God has a will for their lives; or grasping it, fear to what it may lead them.

There is a general will of God, and there is a particular will of God. All men everywhere who have lined up for the right, been true and square and clean, have done the general will of God. One is grateful for them. But a man may do the general will of God and yet miss the particular will of God for him. It is not enough to "do good": we want to do the highest, most good. We want to find just the one thing which God wants us to do, the one niche we can fill, and then live to the uttermost. Nowhere is it truer than in the choice of a life-work that "the good may be the enemy of the best."

Nearly every one will be a Christian within limits. But we do not want to be called "cranks." Recently a man who was not a professing Christian, and called himself agnostic, was asked how many men he thought evaded the issue of personal religion not because they

did not understand it, or did not believe in it, but because they were frankly afraid of how far it would carry them: and he replied, "I think about eighty per cent." If this be true, we have less to fear from unbelief and want of intellectual conviction, and more to fear from prejudice, selfishness and slacking, than some would have us understand. Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and not tried. People never craved freedom more than they do to-day: but they want the freedom of lawlessness, not that of limitation. Religion offers the completest liberty to be found anywhere in the world; but it is liberty through discipline, and people kick at the costs of discipline.

It is when men face the question of life-work that they most frequently bow God politely out of the question. Or if conscience pricks a bit, they pray merely for His sanction upon what they have already decided. By far the larger number of men will go just about this far with religion. "I am willing that God should have my life—all but this one portion of it. I reserve the right to make my own choice as to what I shall do for my life's work. I will not be swept off my feet by an emotional decision to give myself wholly to God, for this will make me unreasonable. I shall take a sane view of the situation, and estimate my own powers, and do what I feel is best." You will notice that this concerns itself solely with subjective qualification, not at all with objective need. This man has not asked himself where the greatest field of need lies, but only what is the measure of his own ability. He has said, "What is the thing that I can do best?" He has failed to say, "What is the best thing that I can do?" And this view of the question makes God and His will a

very remote factor indeed. That God may know more of our powers than we know ourselves, that He is concerned with the welfare of all men, that His will for a man will always result in the very best possible way *for that man*, has not been considered. This man is not seeking first the Kingdom of God—he is seeking first a congenial occupation; the two do not necessarily coincide. But because if God were given a say in the matter it might disrupt our plans, we infinitesimal atoms upon an infinitesimal plane, in the infinite universe of an infinite God, stand up boldly to make a strong show of independence, and choose without regard to the will of that holy, loving, and infinite God. And that is simply a superlatively foolish thing to do.

Surrender to God's will, which is the heart of faith, is summed up in the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" If a man says that and means it, he has settled the most momentous question of his career. It means that hypothetically and for the time being, at least, he gives up every preconceived notion of what he wants to do, every plan he ever had; lest that plan be outside the plan of his Father. So long as an "if" or a "but" remain in his mind, it cannot be surrender. We have got to wipe the slate clean, and then ask Him to write His will upon it. The only way to make sure of a wholly open mind is to put everything else out of it, exposing it like the film of a camera to the impression He seeks to imprint there, and then wait—sometimes briefly, sometimes years—for His purpose to be made known.

Many feel that this action would inevitably lead them into the ministry or mission field. If after you take the step you continue to feel so, then plainly there is your place. God is not prejudiced in favor of mis-

sionaries, I think, nor down on business men. God has much work to be done in many places by all kinds of people. There are surrendered men in law, in business, in engineering, in politics, in teaching and in medicine. But there are hard, uncongenial places in the world, and they are unmanned, and His children are there in need. Somebody must go. There are plenty of good reasons why any man should not go. Probably we are as free as the next. He may want us in one of those places, and if He does, we shall be misfits anywhere else on earth. Surrender does not mean the ministry or the mission field for every man, but it means that for far more men than now choose them, if men face all the facts squarely.

Doing the will of God means emancipation from selfish consideration, so far as that is possible. Hair-splitters and hedonists will find something selfish in the very Cross itself. But those who think simply and directly know selfishness from its opposite. It is hard to see the will of God because there are many people so solicitous for our welfare that they may help the selfish to put on unselfishness—and it is astonishing how clever the disguise may be made. One is perhaps never wholly free from mixed motives, but even they have not done away with the moral law nor tilted the Ten Commandments. It is well to remember that selfishness, like all evil, is ingenious.

The question is often asked whether God will not make His will so clear that we cannot escape, and thereby make surrender unnecessary. The answer is unconditionally *no*. A variety of circumstances may arise, and events may fall out, to make us pause and think of some deeper meaning. But life moves swiftly, the world presses its claims insistently; before we know

it we miss God's signs by the wayside and choose without regard for them. God never intrudes. He is never importunate. He sets before us an open door, but we must choose whether we shall enter into it, or slam it shut in His face. He will never press His view by one iota of compulsion. Christianity is a choice, not a fate; it is appropriated by us, not thrust upon us. No one need believe that God will see His will through whether we give Him help or not; He has limited Himself by giving us wills, by giving us at least a great part in the choice of our own destinies, by endowing us with minds and wills free, in some measure like His own.

Some men resent and abhor this idea of relinquishing the will to God. "Did not God give me a mind and will of my own?" Yes, He did. But He also made me with desires, and in His wisdom He saw fit to let those desires become very selfish and time-serving. Decisions made by minds unenlightened by anything but their own wisdom have brought untold catastrophe upon the world. We are never safe left to our own intellects. We can never fully trust ourselves till we have resigned the mastery of our wills to Him. God is wiser than we; it is only foolish pride which makes us stick out for our own independence in a matter where plainly God has all the facts in hand and we but few. The man who feels that he must stoop to surrender usually *fears* to surrender.

The pressure, right or wrong, of family wish and obligation constitutes one of the most difficult elements in the dedication of life to God. How many times does one hear this: "Father wants me in his business, and he is getting along now, and he has given his life to building it up, and he wants me to take it up and carry it on. He has done a lot for me, and I owe him a great

deal." Yes, you do owe a lot to him, and he has done much for you. No one can deny the sacredness of the debt we owe to those who have given us life and education and all that has been made ours. We owe them everything except to miss the will of God for them. The will of God may be the wish of parents, and it may not. The best deal we can ever give our parents is to be what God meant us to be; this may mean heartaches and broken hopes for a time, but whole destinies are at stake, and mistakes like that, made with our eyes open, are little palliated by purely sentimental considerations. I am convinced after talking with a great many men about the matter of life-work that "Dad's business" is often in conflict with "my Father's business," with which Jesus was busy at twelve years. Christ knew these loyalties would sometimes conflict, and He never spoke more inexorable words than when He denied discipleship to those who put the family first. Some men need to ask themselves the question, "Which Father's business?"

Some deny that it makes any difference where you serve, so long as you serve in the right spirit. On the contrary, I believe it makes every difference where you serve. God has one place for you, and you miss it at your peril. It will not do to invest your life as you see fit, and then give to Him fragments of your time as compensation. Henry Drummond said, "God has a will for career as well as for character." A man ought to feel the pull of the will of God in whatever direction he goes. He must know that this is truly the place to which God wants him to go, else he will never feel satisfied. I have met a tragic lot of men in various occupations, some in the ministry itself, who have some misgivings whether they are in the right place because

they never faced honestly up to all the factors. Let a man look squarely all about him, blink no facts, give sway to no prejudice. Then when he has chosen, let him throw himself into his work with the full assurance that God meant him to be there, and he is filling his place.

Said one man to me, "I suppose the will of God would mean a change in my life's plans, but there were so many things I wanted to get done." And I asked him whether he ever thought of how many things God wanted to get done when He put us off into this world free and responsible men, to live like human beings, and not like apes and tigers; of how much further along the world would be if every man in every age had done what he knew he ought. One feels the guilt of a shuffling humanity, avoiding and missing God's plans, unmoved by His unachieved hopes for humankind. We are dwellers in a world where men cringe and falter. The Kingdom of God, ever Christ's dream for the world, remains bodiless and a hope, an aspiration and not a fact, because such as we have "things that we wanted to get done." The only true loneliness of the Christian life is watching the deflection of those who ought to be bearing real burdens, who see the issue and dodge it.

It is right that men who call themselves Christians should consider Christian work thoroughly. The appeals to secular work are a thousand times greater in number, and come with an insistence and an appeal to certain yielding sides of a man's nature, like the natural human desire for money and prominence, which make all other calls faint and uncertain. Medicine is overstocked in this country, but the profession is badly wanted on the mission field. Teaching is undermanned everywhere because men will not choose the building of

lives instead of the rolling up of incomes. The ministry is in need, not of numbers but of strong men. Young men of any ability are stepping into the shoes of older men because they show promise. There are many years of service ahead of us in foreign lands until the native ministry is able to carry its own load, and the period of transferring responsibility is going to call for men of large calibre on both sides. Some of us, burning with a great vision, need to cut the cables and do "something loving and something daring" for Christ, who dared everything for us.

A frank repudiation of the will of God is constantly the real inwardness of man drifting into tepid professions with great protestations of how much more they can do by not being out-and-out. This is an old battlefield of discussion, and has been fought over many times. But it would seem to be the consensus of Christian experience that in such men there will be a lessening of spiritual conviction, a slackening of the moral ropes, an easy but steady decline into something undistinguished from the ordinary man of the world. Rejection of the will of God is cowardice pure and simple, and it is failure unquestionable in its final outcome. For anywhere else than in the place where God meant you to be, you can have no enduring peace and the unbuyable sense of being right. You may dazzle the world with success, but you will be a dismal failure—and God will know it, and you will know it, and when evening comes, and life is nearly over, you will look back with yearning to the beginnings of the only life you ever can live and say, "Would to God I had taken His way! This tawdry success goes with the dust of my body. Why didn't I work for character values? Why did I miss my place in the kingdom, and leave that open place

in the line? Why was I such a fool when I knew better?" As Forbes Robertson has put it, "Life over, the Ego alone left; and what a poor, wretched, sniveling creature after all—this which we pampered, this which we thrust forward for others to admire and flatter!"

But at this crucial cross-roads we need *not* choose the selfish way, we can choose to do the will of God. We can throw ourselves into His Kingdom and its interests wherever we feel that He wants us to be. And having once for all elected for the good, we may turn to our fellows and do for them the greatest service which any man can do for another, we can persuade them to give their lives to God in full surrender. If it be God's will, perhaps we shall work in the ministry of Christ's church, where if we are about His business, we shall give ourselves full-time to the work of linking lives back to God, that in Him they may live and live abundantly. The hope of the world lies in men who will do the will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

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